

PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee Bob Stump, Chairman

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OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BOB STUMP HEARING ON FY 2003 DOE NATIONAL SECURITY BUDGET

Today, the committee meets to receive testimony on the Department of Energy's fiscal year 2003 budget request for Atomic Energy Defense Activities.

I welcome Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham who will be testifying before the committee for the first time.

I also want to welcome Dr. Everet Beckner, Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs at the National Nuclear Security Administration and Ambassador Linton Brooks, Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation Programs at the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA).

Dr. Beckner and Ambassador Brooks, congratulations on your recent Senate confirmation and appointment to these critical management positions at the NNSA.

Mr. Secretary, we have a lot of ground to cover today and I want to allow each of our members the opportunity to engage with you, so we better get started. I will dispense with a lengthy opening statement but I do want to make a couple of quick points.

Almost two-thirds of the Department of Energy's budget falls within the jurisdiction of this committee. These programs range from the continuing cleanup of the nuclear wastes resulting from the development of our nation's nuclear weapons, funding for the geologic nuclear waste repository, non-proliferation programs with Russia, to maintaining and refurbishing the aging nuclear weapons stockpile.

The recent completion by the Department of Defense of the Congressionally-directed Nuclear Posture Review or NPR laid out the direction of U.S. nuclear forces over the next five to ten years. Although the NPR changes the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national security, nuclear weapons are still a required element of the New Triad.

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On this point, I would note that this review has been a front-page story for the past several days. I don't particularly understand the uproar it seems to have created, as the NPR is simply a broad policy document, and does not contain war plans, or even specifics on future force structure for that matter. Our Armed Forces have always prepared to respond to a wide range of possible contingencies, and continue to do so today. This is not only prudent; it is vitally necessary in this increasingly complex and dangerous world.

Beyond the broad policy debate, the NPR recommendations depend on a well-managed program for stockpile stewardship.

Mr. Secretary, this committee was instrumental in creating the National Nuclear Security Administration with the intention of reversing years of mismanagement of our nuclear weapons programs and its associated infrastructure.

While some progress has been made over the past few years, I think it is fair to say that we had hoped to see more progress at this point in time. I look forward to hearing your assessment, but also hope that you can give us some assurance that we are moving as fast as we can to get the management of these programs in proper order.

On the Environmental Management side of your agency, I want to commend you on your efforts to accelerate cleanup at some of the most contaminated sites by challenging the contractors and the regulators to devise new and better ways to deal with this contamination. With costs escalating and schedules slipping, something has to be done to regain credibility with the public and the Congress.

Mr. Secretary, I believe you will find that this committee will continue to support the need to rebuild this important portion of the national security complex, but we must also receive a better sense that you are properly using those resources which are being presently provided. I trust that today's discussion will help us better understand where you are headed in these critical areas and look forward to your presentation.

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